

Re-starting international education – Q&A



National would allow certified tertiary education providers to bring international students into New Zealand, under strict quarantine and testing protocols, to support our education sector and economic recovery.

Q&A

What are the benefits of international education to New Zealand?

- International students contribute \$5.1 billion a year to the New Zealand economy (according to the Government's own Budget 2020 figures).
- Most of this money does not come from tuition fees, but rather from spending on accommodation, food, tourism, entertainment, living costs etc. all of which supports Kiwi businesses and Kiwi workers.
- Spending by international students supports around 50,000 Kiwi jobs.
- International university students spend an average of \$28,000. For every dollar spent, the flow-on benefit to the economy is estimated to be \$1.60.

What damage has the loss of international students caused?

- New Zealand education providers have suffered significant financial losses. Some estimates suggest New Zealand universities could see a combined loss of up to \$400 million in revenue per year if they are not able to bring in international students.
- This will hurt the quality of education that can be provided to New Zealanders, as it means there is less money to pay for staff, facilities, research or to allow lower tuition fees for domestic students.
- The loss in revenue for tertiary institutions means that some institutions are in a difficult financial position. We are aware that some institutions are laying off staff at this time.

Why don't we just wait a few more months?

- The financial damage to New Zealand depends on how fast we move. We should be working to get as many students into the country as close to the start of the second semester as possible.
- While in some cases students could start their semester online and head to campus part way through, this won't be an option for some of the smaller institutions.
- The longer we delay getting students into the country, the less attractive New Zealand will look as an option compared to our competitors.

- But the gains from moving fast would likely be more:
 - Students would be more likely to remain in New Zealand during the summer holidays, rather than returning home, which means more spending than usual.
 - We could attract students who would otherwise have gone to competitors like the UK or US, but can't because those countries remain closed.
 - Students from countries where restrictions on campus life are still in place, like the US and UK, may now choose to come to level 1 New Zealand to get the full student experience.

How will you do this safely?

- A number of universities have already drawn up plans with Ministry of Health officials to safely bring international students back into New Zealand and quarantine them for 14 days so they can resume their studies. We know of a number of PTEs who have drawn up their own plans to bring students back to New Zealand.
- Students would receive a health check prior to departure, appropriate physical distancing on flights, and another health check for symptoms on arrival.
- Students would be directed by customs officials into a separate channel and accompanied onto dedicated transportation to their quarantine facility.
- Students would be provided with all relevant health advice, along with the rules they will need to abide by while in quarantine.
- They would receive a Covid-19 test at the start of quarantine and be monitored for symptoms throughout their stay.
- They would receive a second Covid-19 test after 14 days, which would need to be negative for them to leave quarantine.

Where will students quarantine?

- National supports a system where tertiary education providers and quarantine facilities are certified/audited by public health officials to bring students in and quarantine them safely.
- Quarantine procedures are already in place for returning New Zealanders. We have managed to eradicate the virus with these in place.
- Our testing proposal would see international students facing more stringent restrictions than are currently in place for returning New Zealanders.
- Education providers would be responsible for organising quarantine facilities. These could be re-purposed halls of residence, hotels etc.
- The private sector will be needed to scale this up sufficiently.

- The Ministry of Health would be responsible for certifying and monitoring these facilities for compliance.
- Health officials would be required to regularly inspect education providers' facilities and review their processes. If providers fail to meet their public health requirements they would lose their certification and their right to bring in students.

How much would it cost?

- Quarantining and testing students would be the responsibility of education providers, who we expect would pass on the costs to international students.

Will there be any costs for the Government involved in this?

- There would be a small amount of investment required by the Government to enable greater auditing of quarantine facilities, visa processing and changes for students.

Why are we prioritising international students?

- We should be doing everything we can to safely bring economic activity back. International students are a very low risk opportunity to do that.
- International education can support the recovery and provide New Zealanders with jobs.

What about work visa holders stuck overseas?

- National recognises a large number of work visa holders who travelled overseas and had been living in New Zealand prior to the border closure are currently unable to return to New Zealand. We support them returning to New Zealand as lockdown restrictions are eased, so long as they follow all quarantine procedures and the labour market test for the job is met.
- We are focussing on students today because of the size of the opportunity, and the risk from delay.

Won't international students compete with Kiwis for jobs?

- We don't want arriving students to be competing with Kiwis for jobs in a time of rising unemployment. That is why we will tweak the current settings:
- **Existing International Students**
 - They will retain pre coronavirus conditions (a cap on hours of 20 hours)
 - We have made commitments to these students, and them to us, so it would be unfair to prejudice them.

- **New International Students**

- New international students coming into New Zealand will not get a working visa exemption for 12 months.

- **Postgraduate students**

- They maintain their existing work permissions, but that work must be in an industry consistent with their course of study reviewable 1 July 2021.
- We are prioritising New Zealanders for jobs but we also understand the importance of postgraduate students to the tertiary sector. Reinforcing that they must work in their career path is reasonable.